United Nations S/PV.4237

Security Council

Fifty-fifth year

Provisional

4237th meeting

Tuesday, 28 November 2000, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. van Walsum	(Netherlands)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Cappagli
	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	Canada	Mr. Heinbecker
	China	Mr. Chen Xu
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Jamaica	Mr. Ward
	Malaysia	Mr. Mohammad Kamal
	Mali	Mr. Kassé
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Tunisia	Mr. Tekaya
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchynski
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir. Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Ms. Soderberg

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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00-76793 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Carolyn McAskie, Emergency Relief Coordinator *ad interim*, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Ms. McAskie to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by the Emergency Relief Coordinator *ad interim* of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Carolyn McAskie, to whom I give the floor.

Ms. McAskie: Let me thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is particularly pertinent at this moment, for, thus far, all diplomatic and military efforts to end what has been described as "Africa's First World War" have not shown results, while the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains one of the worst in the world in terms of both intensity and magnitude.

The overall situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in our view from the humanitarian side, continues to deteriorate as military activity occurs with varying intensity and skirmishes from time to time develop into full-scale battles. The Council is familiar with the unfortunate events that occurred in Kisangani a few months ago, having itself sent a mission to the region. United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations have been forced repeatedly to suspend or forgo operations throughout the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In most parts of Orientale province and parts of Equateur province not under government control, many areas remain inaccessible as a result of a dilapidated or non-existent road network and rampant insecurity. There are recurrent epidemics, a scarcity of medicines and a collapsed health-care system.

The figures of people affected by this conflict are staggering. In three years of protracted civil war, the number of conflict-affected from the Democratic Republic of the Congo has soared to around 16 million people — a full 33 per cent of the population. Council members are familiar with a study issued earlier this year by the International Rescue Committee, which concluded that up to 1.7 million people — approximately 600,000 of them children under five — are likely to have died as a result of the war in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone. About one third of those deaths are actually attributable to violence. The rest are due mainly to preventable diseases and malnutrition caused by the lack of access, the lack of assistance and the sheer inability of people to live a normal life. The study suggests that child mortality rates in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are among the highest in the world and, tragically, this is likely to increase even further.

Flagrant human rights violations prevail throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo and occur in an atmosphere of total impunity. In terms of displaced persons, civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are afforded no protection, but are, on the

contrary, systematically targeted by all parties to the conflict. We have provided a series of briefing maps to the Council from which members will see that over two million people have been displaced.

Of particular concern is the situation of the Kivus and Orientale province, where insurgencies, counter-insurgencies and ethnic tensions have led to some 950,000 civilians being displaced. This is further complicated by the presence of armed groups, which use random violence against civilians as a strategy of war.

Of particular concern is the situation of large numbers of people who have opted for refuge in the rainforest — around 200,000 in all. Many of them have suffered repeat displacements; they have fled to remote areas, subsisting mainly on wild berries and raw food, with little or no access to health care. We also continue to learn of internally displaced persons who are systematically subjected to forced labour, finding themselves in the hands of the military or various militia groups as prisoners or hostages. Children suffer an equally terrible fate and we continue to hear reports of recruitment of Congolese children, some of them being taken to neighbouring countries.

As far as refugees are concerned, there are currently over 300,000 in neighbouring countries, with a rapid and recent exodus from Equateur province into the Republic of Congo — a tragic situation for a country that has recently been coming out of a war of its own, now to suffer the double burden of a tremendous inflow of refugees; 100,000 have fled to the Republic of Congo alone and another 10,000 to the Central African Republic. In the past two weeks, 5,000 more people have fled from Katanga into Zambia. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, however, is also, conversely, host to over 330,000 refugees who have fled civil strife in the neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Uganda and the Sudan.

What does this mean for the Democratic Republic of the Congo? It means that the economy has all but crumbled, leaving the vast majority of the country's population to face dire financial hardship. The war, compounded by deep-rooted economic and social problems, mismanagement and neglect, has rendered food shortages commonplace and has sparked a devastating increase in malnutrition. There are extreme food deficits ranging from 20 per cent to 55 per cent of demand in some parts of the country. The foreign exchange rate is at twice its previous valuation; there is a standing ban on the use of foreign currency, and the already limited resources available for humanitarian activities have depreciated seriously, putting at risk those who are most in need of assistance.

Humanitarian agencies find it increasingly difficult to operate in this environment and to provide the level of assistance needed to save lives. The war has had the twin effects of creating new populations in need and at the same time creating untenable security environments that impede access to those same populations. This is further exacerbated by logistical constraints which render the delivery of assistance to many remote areas extremely difficult, if not impossible.

These problems are encountered both in Government-controlled regions of the country and in areas controlled by all three rebel entities: the Rally for Democracy (RCD), the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) and the Rally for Democracy-Liberation Movement (RCD-ML). In Government areas, the problems stem from strict administrative procedures surrounding the granting of access, while in rebel-held areas lack of access derives from the prevailing lack of security. In one notable instance where obstacles prevented access, an estimated 300,000 displaced persons in southern Equateur and another 150,000 internally displaced persons in northern Katanga were left without desperately needed humanitarian assistance despite the fact that the humanitarian agencies had both the means and the capacity to undertake delivery; they were prevented from entering.

Despite those problems, the United Nations agencies on the ground continuously work hard to respond to the situation at hand. That has resulted, for instance, in a number of breakthrough operations in some of the most critical conflict-affected areas, including Kasai, northern Katanga, Equateur, Ituri and South Kivu. The United Nations maintains a country-wide presence in all 11 provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United Nations agencies and the Humanitarian Coordinator enjoy the extremely close and useful collaboration of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and the comprehensive support of Mr. Kamel Morjane, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I would say that this is one of

the best examples of political and humanitarian cooperation in the realm of United Nations exercises.

This year, significant success was achieved — and we have indeed had some success — through the implementation of a nationwide polio eradication campaign that reached more than 10 million children under the age of five, and through other country-wide and cross-front-line initiatives. For example, this year's State examination campaign included 28,000 students. It is hard to tell how many children are in school in the Democratic Republic of the Congo these days; estimates range from 35 per cent to 50 per cent of school-age children receiving primary education.

Against that backdrop, the consolidated appeals for funds for the year 2000 requested $71.4 million. The response to date has been 61 per cent: $43.6 million. However, more than 80 per cent of the funding provided was for food assistance and food security programmes, with critically low funding received for primary health, epidemics control, child protection, human rights and confidence-building sectors. Because of the magnitude of the crisis, the net impact of the humanitarian assistance provided in the Democratic Republic of the Congo can only be described as minimal. In 2000, of the 16 million war-affected people, less than 50 per cent received humanitarian assistance, and even that on a sporadic basis.

Earlier today, the Secretary-General launched the appeals for 2001. The 2001 appeal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo articulates a humanitarian strategy with the following elements: immediate provision of life-saving support; enhancing survival strategies and coping mechanisms of war-affected populations; facilitation and promotion of free circulation of persons and goods across the front line; and support to community-based self-recovery initiatives.

Members of the Council will see from the information package provided that this coming year's consolidated appeal includes projects that target different levels of intervention, from household food security and health interventions at the local level, to wider assistance programmes requiring participation from all parts of the country. To prevent an even larger humanitarian catastrophe, this is one of the few appeals in which we have vastly increased the amount of money requested, but to a relatively modest $139.5 million — modest, that is, in relation to the need. A keystone of humanitarian response will be the emergency humanitarian intervention mechanism that we have created, which provides funds for rapid emergency response to situations such as those that arose in Kisangani last June and most recently in Equateur province. It makes funds available locally through donations from our donors, funds we can access immediately to respond to an on-the-spot crisis.

As the humanitarian situation becomes increasingly grave for growing numbers of Congolese, the efforts of the United Nations and its implementing partners are being hampered by the lack of security, limited access to affected populations and critically few resources for life-saving interventions. What is needed now is a genuine commitment by all parties to ensure that access for humanitarian agencies is improved. I would urge Council members to impress upon all parties to the conflict the need for cooperation to ensure full humanitarian access across the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It would be of paramount importance for all parties to the conflict fully to respect international humanitarian law, human rights law and the principles of engagement for humanitarian assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo drawn up by the humanitarian agencies, in order to ensure that civilians will not be targeted by violence or forced to flee their homes, and that humanitarian personnel will be provided with the necessary guarantees of safety and security.

Moreover, the world community must realize that the means currently available to the relief community are not commensurate with the magnitude of what is certainly one of the world's gravest humanitarian crises.

We would like to draw the attention of the international donor community to what we see as the crucial symbiosis between peace and humanitarian assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that increased donor assistance can reinforce common objectives of life-saving, rebuilding livelihoods and promoting peace and security.

Particular attention could be given to the security of aid workers operating in highly insecure and volatile areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A particular request is made in the consolidated appeal for support for the security element.

I would say that this past year has been a year that signified the departure from a passive to a more challenging and result-oriented approach to tackling the devastating effects of war. The achievements could be rated as significant despite the enormous difficulties. But the low level of funding means that humanitarian operations remain on a hand-to-mouth basis.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is under political, social and economic stress, and its problems are deeply interconnected with those of its neighbours. The people of the Congo are becoming exhausted, no longer able to cope with the violence and impoverishment to which they are subjected on a daily basis. The failure to sustain any semblance of normalcy must be recognized as the result of decades of poor government and an absence of governance. Ironically, it is that absence of governance that has taught the people of the Congo how to survive and that has sparked their resilience.

We recognize that a commitment from the international community to address the humanitarian situation will not by itself solve the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We fully support the efforts of the Security Council to continue to seek lasting solutions to address the military and political issues, in concert with humanitarian efforts. While the humanitarian situation is extremely grave, we know that a humanitarian response is not viewed as a substitute; nor should it preclude the search for a long-term solution.

The President: I thank Ms. McAskie for her comprehensive and illuminating briefing.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for scheduling this briefing by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This follows the logic of the meeting we had in March on the humanitarian situation in Iraq. Today's meeting also represents the first follow-up to the provision made in resolution 1327 (2000) for humanitarian briefings on conflict situations. We appreciate the very useful briefing given by Ms. Carolyn McAskie. We also thank her for sharing with us a nicely bound and very informative folder.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued to deteriorate; the number of displaced persons has increased; more people are being driven from their hearth and home; more people are being forced out of the country; there is renewed fighting in Kisangani or the Kivus or Equateur; there are casualties; there are gross violations of humanitarian laws and human rights; belligerent parties continue to recruit children and send them to the front line for combat; the situation is grave, but humanitarian access in many areas remains difficult. That has in essence been the substance of the quarterly reports of the Secretary-General and the periodic briefings given by the Secretariat over the year. The situation, as Ms. McAskie has informed us today, has not improved in any of these areas.

It is appalling that 16 million people, or 33 per cent of the country's population, remain in critical need of food, and that a large number of people suffer epidemic outbreaks of cholera, meningitis, dysentery, malaria and haemorrhagic fever. Women and children are most affected by this crisis.

The recent leadership wrangles in the Congolese Rally for Democracy-Liberation Movement (RCD-ML) has claimed at least 40 lives in Bunia and has forced about 1,000 people out of the country. Such fratricidal wars must stop. We call upon the parties to immediately halt all military action and open humanitarian corridors for these people. We also urge members of the United Nations with influence on the parties to secure necessary humanitarian access to these areas.

It is unfortunate that all actors — internal and external — continue to justify the war by insisting that they have their stakes. As the war is fought at the expense of the Congolese people, it would seem, from the behaviour of the belligerents, that the people alone have no stakes or that their lives or their right to peace and prosperity have no place in the belligerents' minds. It is this point that High Commissioner Sadako Ogata tried to impress upon the leaders during her June visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, when she said,

> "Don't forget the people and, as you negotiate, don't ignore the human cost of the war."

The failure to recognize the human cost of the war is demonstrated by the continued ceasefire violations by all parties. The recent ceasefire violations in the north of Katanga are deeply deplorable. The RCD's recapture

of the town of Pepa complicates the situation and challenges the role the United Nations could play there.

The dire humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as in other conflict zones, is the direct consequence of conflicts. The long-term solution of the humanitarian crisis lies in a political settlement. Humanitarian assistance cannot be an alternative to a political settlement. The Council had extended the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) by two months to allow for political and diplomatic initiatives for the full deployment of the United Nations mission.

The Council will have to take a serious decision on continued engagement by the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as the mandate of MONUC comes to an end after the technical roll-over. The progress that we expected from the different diplomatic initiatives has proved elusive so far. This is certainly a source of serious concern. We, however, continue to believe that the United Nations must remain engaged in the Democratic Republic of the Congo while efforts continue in order to create conditions for the full deployment of MONUC. We hold the view that the existence of a peace agreement should not be an obstacle to a peace settlement. If need be, while maintaining commitment to the Lusaka Agreement, the parties could, in order to move forward, agree to additional provisions like the Kampala disengagement plan.

The United Nations, like the parties to the conflict, cannot ignore the regional dimension of the conflict. It has been repeatedly mentioned here that there is no military solution to the crisis. Lusaka represents a package. The United Nations has welcomed it and remains committed to help in its implementation. If the parties so require, we would, in principle, have no problem with a Lusaka-II or Lusaka-III. We should support all serious efforts that advance the prospects of peace. It should be recognized by all parties that an inclusive political process is a prerequisite to any credible disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

It is regrettable that the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions remain without compliance, although they are mandatory for the concerned parties. The key to the resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to comprehensive peace in the Great Lakes region lies in the full implementation of the relevant Council resolutions. That should take place without any further delay.

I would conclude by recalling the wise advice of President Mandela. Speaking about the rebel groups in Burundi, he said that surrender of weapons by rebels cannot be realistically expected until they can become fully involved in the peace process. He mentioned that the African National Congress did not give up arms until it was allowed to be fully engaged in the political process. There should be useful wisdom in the words of an elder statesman for the authorities in Kinshasa and other, neighbouring capitals.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): We warmly welcome the briefing from the acting Emergency Relief Coordinator, which was a very good, very clear and, in some of its aspects, quite depressing briefing. I want to go back to one or two points of detail.

It is very good to hear that there is excellent coordination with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team, which is the kind of coordination that we need to see in the most difficult and complex situations — particularly in Africa, as we pointed out in the report of our mission to Sierra Leone. That is good news.

I do not want to get into the detail of the politics of what we face in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We shall discuss that on later occasions — with the troop contributors this week and when we consider the roll-over of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). In addition to the humanitarian situation, the general situation is depressing, because Lusaka is not being implemented as it should have been implemented by the parties. They virtually all bear some responsibility for that in their several ways.

We in the Council all know that the Congo is perhaps the greatest challenge we have to face with respect to Africa in the Security Council, and we have got to get it right. It is a more serious and complex situation even than Sierra Leone, and we must give it the same effort and the same intensity. I hope that somewhere we will find some leadership for addressing the problems of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, both from within the region and from outside. But we will come to the details of that in due course when we

address the rollovers and when we have an account of the meetings that have taken place in Maputo and that are to take place later in Lusaka.

The first indications of the second Maputo meeting are that there is increasing weariness with continuing the conflict, increasing impatience from the parties within the region — those that are not contributing to the early implementation of Lusaka, or whatever they can agree between them to substantiate Lusaka — and there is, I think, an interesting indication from Kinshasa that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is willing to work with MONUC and with the international agencies to try to make things operate better on the ground. In meeting the objectives that we have set ourselves, that would all be good news if it were confirmed, but there is an enormous amount to do.

I pay particular tribute to the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and to that of the agencies and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the ground. I think that they are facing the most awful conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Not only is there sometimes almost complete insecurity for them as operators, but there is also a dire lack of proper infrastructure and proper support. It is vital for their security and for their ability to do their job that they get help on the ground from everybody concerned.

I am therefore quite interested to hear more details from the Coordinator ad interim on the present state of the relationship of the agencies with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with the factions that operate in the areas where they find themselves. The Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Mouvement de libération (RCD-ML) is in Kisangani and Goma, and the Mouvement de libération (MLC) is in Equateur province. I would just like a bit more detail on the actual state of relations now — what kind of help is being provided, what kind of obstructions are there, where the Coordinator ad interim feels the greatest insecurities are, and what we are going to need to talk about when we look at the primary tasks for the deployment of MONUC, if and when we come to that.

We would also be interested to know whether the agencies are developing with the NGOs a coordinated aid strategy that responds to the humanitarian situation and where the lacunae are in that particular process, if any, or whether that coordination picture is also quite good. Generally, we would like also to know what the current obstacles are to humanitarian access, which we ought to be addressing at the same time as we look at MONUC rollover.

I think that it is quite important to use this briefing to try to specify the actual points which may be remediable with a huge amount of effort and a bit of goodwill, to be differentiated from those where it is fairly hopeless to expect any real improvement in the near future.

My delegation takes note of what the Coordinator ad interim said about funding, in particular the regrettable focus only on food as opposed to non-food aid. I think part of the reason may be the sense of helplessness over the Congo, that one does not invest one's aid into those things that need programmes extending over time, whereas one does invest in food, because food is a daily need that has to be delivered into mouths day by day, and it can go on as best as one can handle it. But disease, transport and other aspects that the Coordinator ad interim has mentioned are programmes for which confidence, stability and continuity are required, and that may be part of the problem. But we have taken note of where the deficiencies are.

With those points and questions and in more detail, I am looking forward to some further remarks from the Coordinator ad interim later. I think I will stop there.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada is deeply concerned by the serious humanitarian crisis resulting from the continuation of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The conflict has caused unspeakable suffering to the population of the Congo as well as enormous loss of life and material damage. The fact that this situation has lasted now for more than three years is intolerable.

At the present time, the major obstacle to humanitarian access for those people who need emergency assistance is the non-implementation of the Lusaka Agreement by the parties and the lack of zeal of those parties in cooperating with the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

We join our colleagues in condemning all violations of the ceasefire. We urge all parties concerned in the region to cease immediately military

activity and to implement fully the Lusaka Agreement and the Kampala disengagement plan. We call on all parties to the conflict, and in particular the Government, to respect their obligations, particularly in ensuring the safety and freedom of movement of United Nations and humanitarian personnel. We join the United Kingdom in saluting those heroes who are working in the Congo on our behalf in the most difficult of conditions.

We encourage all United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work closely together in developing an effective and holistic strategy to address the urgent humanitarian needs of civilians.

Canada condemns all violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed in both Government and rebel-controlled areas. Those responsible for violations, including serious crimes such as crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other grave violations of humanitarian law, must be brought to justice. There cannot be peace or reconciliation if we do not put an end to the culture of impunity.

On a further issue, Canada is greatly concerned with continuing official infringement on the right of free expression, in violation of the Lusaka Agreement. We are particularly concerned by the recent announcement by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that "to criticize the State is to be an enemy of the State". Freedom of opinion and expression are essential as peace- and confidence-building measures.

(*spoke in French*)

We have been informed that, apparently, certain non-governmental organizations believe that a significant deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) might further hamper humanitarian access by provoking hostile forces to oppose any international presence.

We would be grateful to the Bureau of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for sharing their assessment of this view.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open briefing, and I should like also to thank Ms. Carolyn McAskie for the important information that she has shared with us, both orally and in writing, on the serious humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The humanitarian situation and the political and military situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be considered separately, because the former is, to a great extent, the consequence of the latter. The current military situation, characterized by the absence of peace and the absence of widespread warfare but marked by local conflicts, implies a lack of solutions to problems of, among others, refugees, massive displacements of populations, chronic malnutrition, health and educational opportunities for young people. In sum, the humanitarian crisis resulting from armed conflict is gradually eroding the living conditions of the majority of the Congolese population, relegating one of the African States richest in natural resources to position 152 out of a total of 174 countries on the human development index.

Armed conflict also affects the conditions in which the humanitarian organizations carry out their work. They are operating in a security context that is different from the one the parties agreed to respect in July 1999, when they signed the Lusaka Agreement. The parties have repeatedly violated the ceasefire and the humanitarian clauses of the Agreement. The humanitarian organizations have faced limited access to vulnerable populations, restrictions on their freedom of movement and serious security risks in Government-administered areas as well as in areas under the control of the three main rebel movements. Of a total of 1,800,000 internally displaced persons, the humanitarian agencies have access to only one-sixth of that number because of widespread insecurity. The parties must assume responsibility for the human costs of limiting access to vulnerable groups. In this context, Argentina wishes to reiterate once again the importance of respecting the principles stemming from the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

I also wish to refer to the violations of international law occurring in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the eastern part of the country. There have been crimes against humanity there. Suffice it to recall the massacres of the civilian population in Kalimbo, Katogata and Lusenda-Lumimba. These massacres cannot go unpunished. The necessary mechanisms to carry out an international

investigation must be created and those responsible must be brought to justice.

Humanitarian assistance is an essential palliative in a crisis situation, but it is no substitute for the fundamental political decisions that the parties to the conflict must take. In our judgement, these decisions go beyond full compliance and good faith with the Lusaka Agreement, involving respect for the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the principle of non-intervention in its internal matters, security guarantees for all the States of the region, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, and the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also believe that the deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), when there are reasonable security conditions — and I say "reasonable", not "ideal" — will be a factor of stability that will contribute to the substantive resolution of the matter, as well as facilitating the work of the humanitarian organizations.

In conclusion, permit me to make two brief observations.

The political and military situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be analysed in isolation; rather it should be seen in the context of the situation in the Great Lakes region. We believe that the humanitarian situation must be analysed with the same regional approach.

We also believe that long-term stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be seen separately from the strengthening of democratic institutions and the promotion of sustainable development throughout the region; that is, a regional, comprehensive approach is needed. For these reasons, we wish to reiterate once again our support for France's idea of convening an international conference on the Great Lakes region when the appropriate political conditions exist.

Mr. Levitte (France)(*spoke in French*): I wish to thank Ms. Carolyn McAskie, acting Emergency Relief Coordinator, for her accurate and detailed briefing, which is very useful for our Security Council because it sheds light on a misunderstood or little known aspect of the tragedy being experienced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo: the humanitarian situation. Therefore, I also wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative of organizing this Security Council meeting on this vital question.

Our debate today is an important stage in the work being done by the Security Council this month on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It clarifies our reflection on the international community's attitude to the conflict in this country. In two weeks we will be making decisions on United Nations action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Council must be in a position to express a view when it has examined all the aspects of the question.

The humanitarian aspects are, in our view, essential. As Ms. McAskie has rightly emphasized, the situation is tragic. In addition to Ms. McAskie's briefing, we also bear in mind the information provided by the Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Garretón, whom the Security Council heard in October during an "Arria" meeting. Mr. Garretón gave a briefing on human rights violations throughout the country, emphasizing in particular that the most basic right, the right to life, was scorned, particularly in the eastern part of the country. Mr. Garretón's report lists of massacres of the civilian population and inter-ethnic confrontations in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We also bear in mind information transmitted to us by non-governmental organizations. I refer particularly to the report issued in June 2000 by the American organization International Rescue Committee, which estimated that from August 1998 to May 2000 the conflict had caused the death of more than 1.7 million persons in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone.

I do not mean to join in a battle of figures here, but two essential points must be recalled: first, the victims of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo number in the hundreds of thousands, unfortunately; and, secondly, the deaths result, on the one hand, from the violence committed against civilians and the resultant displacement of populations, and, on the other hand, from the interruption of assistance caused by instability in the area and the lack of access to these populations. Thus the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has tragic humanitarian consequences.

We must be aware that this crisis is political and military. The current situation is deeply rooted in the tragedies of the Great Lakes region over the last decade. The immediate cause of the conflict is the crisis that was triggered in August 1998. We must therefore give the Congolese humanitarian support to help them meet their immediate needs, and in this spirit we encourage the actions of the United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and non-governmental organizations.

As part of the European Union, France is also providing assistance through the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), which this year has set up a programme to provide health care and assistance to displaced persons.

However, we must also contribute to a political settlement of this conflict. That is the responsibility of our Council. Efforts to implement the Lusaka Agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions have encountered many difficulties, but the United Nations must continue to pursue those efforts. I should like to say once again what I have often said during our debates: we must not give up. How could we give up, after hearing Carolyn McAskie's comments?

In the coming days, the Security Council will be called upon to decide, on the basis of recommendations to be made by the Secretary-General, what support MONUC can provide to the settlement process. France believes that we must continue to pursue our efforts. Here, I would like to endorse a point that our Argentine colleague has just forcefully underlined: MONUC must retain the resources envisaged for it last February so that it can fully play its role, and these resources must be effectively deployed.

In the light of our debate today, we will have to consider whether MONUC can also play a role in better evaluating the humanitarian situation and thereby contribute to the assistance effort. In this regard, we believe that it would be desirable to strengthen the civilian component of the United Nations mission. In several conflict situations, the United Nations has incorporated a civilian component into its on-site missions, particularly in missions with both a civilian and military aspect, such as was the case until 1998 in Angola. It is also the case in Afghanistan at present, where there are civilian observers as part of the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan. Such a civilian observer component, as distinct from military observers, could perhaps play a useful role within MONUC in assessing the situation and ensuring liaison with civil society.

Naturally, the conditions for deploying such civilian observers — in particular with regard to security — would have to be examined carefully. I listened to the comments of our colleague from Canada, and I, too, would like to hear Ms. McAskie's opinion on that matter. I would also be interested to hear her thoughts about my comments regarding the possibility of deploying civilian observers within MONUC in order to play a supplementary role.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): My delegation thanks the acting Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Carolyn McAskie, for her briefing on the deplorable humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the most mineral-rich country in Africa, yet it has the worst humanitarian situation in the world. Indeed, Ms. McAskie's briefing only confirmed our worst fears about the immense suffering of the Congolese people as a result of the senseless war of aggression. My delegation strongly deplores the current state of affairs and the targeting of civilians.

Today's meeting affords us an opportunity to reflect on the fate of those Congolese women, men and children who continue to be uprooted from their homes or who are killed and maimed, in addition to the women who are rape victims. In our view, our objective should be to address their situation by helping to put an end to this suffering. In order to do that, we must address the causes of the situation, which is the aggression of Uganda and Rwanda against the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that Congolese civilians live in dignity, like those in any other nation on earth. We are particularly concerned about the civilians in the eastern part of the country. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo shows a clear but sad picture of the humanitarian situation, especially in the eastern part of the country. At a closed briefing for Council members last month, Mr. Garretón, in explaining the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, stated that in the east of the country there is no right to life. In our view, that sums it all up.

Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular the deliberate targeting of civilians and their communities in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, must stop. The Security Council must do more to end the culture of impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in the occupied eastern part of the country.

The war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has implications beyond that country's borders. It has devastating implications beyond the central African region. This is evident from the briefing we just heard: there are thousands of internally displaced persons, and so many neighbouring countries are affected by the refugee flow. These generous neighbours have to carry an extra burden of hosting thousands of refugees. Some of them are least developed countries, while others have just emerged from conflict themselves and are making efforts to reconstruct their economies. Worse still, the situation could have serious repercussions for the rest of the African continent.

As I listened to the briefing by Ms. McAskie, I could not help but recall the briefings we heard from the women of Sierra Leone and Somalia during the preparations for the meeting on women and peace and security. Their experience could surely apply to any women and children in a conflict situation. The raging war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo thus vividly underscores the fact that women remain the worst affected of all groups in the avoidable conflict in that country.

Apart from being killed, wounded or maimed permanently, women are subjected to all other forms of atrocities of war. Soldiers prey upon them, they are humiliated by being raped, sometimes in the presence of their husbands or children, and as a result of being raped they have a high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The burying alive of 15 Congolese women in South Kivu is still fresh in our memories. We are still awaiting and demand the findings of the investigation into this barbaric act.

The international community — and in particular the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security — cannot and should not allow continued mass displacements and major breaches of international humanitarian law to persist with impunity. The perpetrators of such crimes should be held responsible for their actions.

I should here like to emphasize the complementarity of action by the Security Council and by the humanitarian agencies in the field. It is clear that one cannot meet humanitarian needs while failing to address what caused the needs in the first place. In her last briefing to the Security Council, the outgoing High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, made concrete and forward-looking proposals to this end. We in the Council must therefore exercise the necessary political will to address the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo if the humanitarian agencies are to effectively bring long-term relief to the suffering masses.

The ongoing fighting is a great source of concern to my delegation, as it is not only a violation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, but is contributing immensely to the displacement of innocent civilians. Clearly, the parties engaged in the current fighting are taking advantage of the minimal presence of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in the country. We have no doubt that the presence of MONUC on the ground will act as a deterrent, that it will improve the humanitarian situation and thus prevent further loss of life, displacement and misery. We are heartened by the outcome of the second Maputo summit. It is our hope that the United Nations, and especially the Security Council, will not be found wanting again this time.

My delegation is grateful to all humanitarian agencies and organizations that are providing much-needed relief under difficult conditions. The safety and security of humanitarian workers providing that much-needed relief are therefore paramount. We are also grateful to those donor countries that have been providing resources for assistance to the Congolese refugees and internally displaced persons. We also wish to express our thanks to the European Union for its continued support for the needy people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, we call on the donor community to respond generously to the forthcoming inter-agency appeal for 2001.

It would be remiss of me to end my remarks without expressing my delegation's thanks and appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having scheduled this meeting. Since 1960, when that gallant son of Africa, Patrice Lumumba, was assassinated, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have

never enjoyed social and economic prosperity. For 37 years, they lived under the rule of the most brutal dictator, only to find themselves and their country being attacked and besieged. The Security Council must not and cannot abandon the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The illegal exploitation of the mineral wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should not take precedence over the dignity and humanity of the Congolese people.

The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, must stay the course, fulfilling its responsibility in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Soderberg (United States of America): I commend your vision, Mr. President, in having this important meeting today. As we discussed this morning regarding East Timor, when other crises divert our attention we tend to let fall by the wayside some of the urgent crises before us, and I commend your vision in scheduling this meeting today despite the other pressing business that is occurring around the world.

I would also like to pay a special tribute to Carolyn McAskie for her leadership on this issue, as well as for her briefing on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — as depressing as that situation is. As the Emergency Relief Coordinator for the United Nations she has a somewhat Sisyphean task in trying to address all these issues. We admire her tenacity in continuing to address what is by all accounts a very depressing and discouraging situation.

After looking at the situation and listening to Ms. McAskie's briefing and reviewing the notes that she passed out, I think that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo demands the continued attention of the international community and continued pressing by the international community on all sides to do more. The people about whose suffering we have just heard certainly deserve no less. I think one has to admit that the Governments of the region — of the Congo, and particularly of Rwanda, Uganda and, obviously, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the various armed Congolese and other foreign rebel factions — all share responsibility for this humanitarian crisis that we have just heard described here today. I hope that if there is one unequivocal and clear message to both the Governments involved and the rebel sides involved it is that they should all hear today's programme of the international community and recommit themselves to the search for peace. To do otherwise is simply unconscionable.

It is important to remember that this crisis, this disaster — and I think that by all accounts it has to be termed a disaster on every human level — is entirely man-made, and that means it can be entirely solved by men, and of course by women as well. As Ambassador Levitte pointed out earlier, we do not have the choice of giving up. We must continue to address this issue. If one looks at this man-made disaster, the only conclusion one can draw is a broad indictment of those who seek to win or retain power by the force of arms.

The withdrawal of foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1304 (2000) and, let us not forget, the Lusaka Agreement, which all these parties signed, would greatly benefit the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Governments have to be held accountable to their people and responsive to their needs. It is our view that responsive Governments resting on broad bases of support are necessary for the resolution of humanitarian crises.

The solution to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo involves political will, resources and time. Thus far the Governments involved have failed to demonstrate the political will, the international community has failed to marshal the necessary resources, and the lack of a functioning peace agreement has meant that the time for recovery continues to be delayed.

A solution will also require combating the deadly combination of three factors that have brought the Democratic Republic of the Congo to its present state. These three factors are foreign aggression, internal armed rebellion and unaccountable Government. We must work together to address all three.

During our January 2000 Security Council presidency, Ambassador Holbrooke, working with our Ambassadors in the region, asked Presidents Museveni and Kabila to cooperate in the reopening of the Congo River to civilian traffic. At the time, that proposal was not accepted, but after 11 months it deserves to be reconsidered. We call on Presidents Kabila and Museveni, as well as Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) leader Jean-Pierre Bemba, to work together to implement a viable ceasefire that should

include the reopening of the Congo River to civilian traffic.

The well-being of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as their neighbours in the Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, is at stake. We make this appeal as part of a wider call on all parties to facilitate the operations of the humanitarian community, bearing in mind the fact that the Congo River and its tributaries are an essential lifeline for most of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This Council is united in its support and admiration for the work of the humanitarian agencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Under difficult conditions, at great expense and often at considerable risk, the men and women of the United Nations and of the non-governmental organization and private voluntary organization communities have tried to alleviate the suffering caused by callous political leaders. We know that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is working here in New York and in Geneva to improve the humanitarian assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We support those efforts, under the overall authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Kamel Morjane, and we will continue our own engagement on behalf of the innocent victims in this conflict.

Neither the United Nations nor any of its Member States can impose a solution to the crisis. A solution must come from the political leadership and be respected by all of the combatants, foreign and Congolese. The point of humanitarian assistance is to sustain vulnerable civilian life until such time as the political leadership can reach agreement. Until the parties can do so, we must continue to support the humanitarian community in its efforts. Those who facilitate and protect the entry of humanitarian assistance are to be commended; those who impede or divert such aid must be condemned for their actions.

The courageous work of Carolyn McAskie and OCHA and the other humanitarian organizations does not detract from the urgency of our own tasks. Rather, it reminds us that the sooner we see the withdrawal of foreign forces, the transformation of armed insurgencies into armed political parties and the creation of accountable government institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the sooner the Congolese people will be able to take care of themselves.

In closing, we believe that achieving the political objectives of a viable framework for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its region remains the key to resolving the humanitarian crisis. Until we achieve a peaceful settlement, we must all work together to support the life-saving work of OCHA and other organizations that are trying to protect the innocent victims of this conflict.

Mr. Chen Xu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. McAskie of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for her presentation.

We are now in the third year since the outbreak of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has left millions of people displaced and homeless. Many refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo have fled abroad. At the same time, large numbers of foreign refugees have entered the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The humanitarian situation in that country and the region as a whole has further deteriorated. We are very concerned.

The Chinese delegation condemns atrocities against civilians. We call upon the parties concerned to truly comply with the relevant agreements and Security Council resolutions, cease hostilities promptly and find a political solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The continuation of the conflict has become the direct cause of the current humanitarian crisis in that country. Only by resolving the conflict can it be possible to fundamentally ease the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For some time now, regional summits on the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been held one after another. We encourage this momentum in the search for a political solution to the conflict. We also hope that the parties to the conflict will implement the commitments they have made in earnest. We are of the view that the United Nations, including the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, should continue to work for the peace process in that country.

We appreciate the efforts made by humanitarian personnel under difficult conditions to improve the

humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope their safety and security will be ensured.

In conclusion, the Chinese delegation will continue to support the relevant work of the United Nations, and OCHA in particular.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to associate ourselves with the words of gratitude to Ms. McAskie for her very informative and substantive briefing. Unfortunately, this briefing reaffirms our own assessment of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as being close to catastrophic. We have a very high assessment of the efforts of the international community aimed at not allowing a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation. At the same time, it is obvious that a long-term and stable solution to the humanitarian crisis is possible only through a political settlement of the conflict.

Our position of principle in favour of a speedy political settlement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the basis of the Lusaka Agreement, remains unchanged. We believe that, through the adoption of Security Council resolution 1304 (2000), the Council sent the parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo an appropriate signal concerning the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the implementation of the commitments undertaken in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement without disruptions or backsliding.

Based on the lack of any alternative to a political solution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we consider the long-term cooperation of all parties to the conflict with the United Nations Mission, in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council, to be of the utmost importance, as well as the establishment of the inter-Congolese national dialogue, with the participation of all political forces of the country, in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement.

Now it is important to refrain from rash decisions and, with coordination between the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the Southern African Development Community and the States involved in the conflict, to continue to consider the most suitable forms of United Nations assistance to the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the establishment of conditions for the deployment of the second phase of the United Nations peacekeeping operation.

Mr. Tekaya (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Tunisian delegation, I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for having convened this important meeting and for giving us an opportunity to hear the presentation by Ms. Carolyn McAskie on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I should also like to thank Ms. McAskie for her very useful presentation, which reflects both the scope of the humanitarian tragedy in the country and the untiring efforts deployed by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners to provide assistance to the people affected.

Indeed, the war that is ravaging the Democratic Republic of the Congo has shattered the life of the Congolese and has had disastrous consequences for a large part of the population. Its effects have struck harshly the economy of the country and have taken a heavy social toll. We can see the effects of the crisis in the daily life of the Congolese people. The Security Council mission that went to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last May was able to assess the breadth of the crisis, which has worsened since then, and forecasts of what will happen next are of great concern. All of the regions of the country are suffering the consequences of the war, but the situation in the eastern part of the country remains particularly volatile.

The humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is marked by an increasing number of displaced persons, approaching 2 million, and they are increasingly vulnerable. Moreover, the movement of Congolese refugees towards neighbouring countries has created worrying humanitarian, health and security situations. In addition, tens of thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries have flowed into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is also facing a serious health crisis because of the spread of various diseases to which the refugees and displaced persons are particularly vulnerable, and also because of the weakness of the health infrastructure of the country. Food shortages have become serious. Education is also harshly affected by war.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo thus poses many challenges for the international community and humanitarian organizations. The United Nations and humanitarian organizations play an essential role in saving the lives of those affected by war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in meeting the humanitarian needs of vulnerable populations. However, there are many obstacles in their way, making it difficult to accomplish their mission.

Today's meeting, which once again confirms the extent of the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, coincides with the launching by the United Nations, working with its humanitarian partners, of the joint humanitarian action plan for 2001 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This should mobilize the international community to increase its assistance to the Congolese people and its support for the efforts to establish peace and reconciliation in the country and in the region.

It is necessary to increase humanitarian aid in order to provide relief to the affected populations. We agree, however, that the effect on the general situation in the country will be limited if no progress is made in the peace process.

Last January, the parties to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement reaffirmed here before the Security Council their support for the Agreement, and they undertook to respect its terms. Since then we have seen successive developments that have jeopardized the peace process, and the Security Council has stated its views on these developments. In addition, the long-awaited complete deployment of phase two of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which gave rise to much hope, has not yet taken place, and the foreign forces have not yet withdrawn from Congolese territory as demanded by the Security Council in its resolutions. In the meantime, the humanitarian, economic and social situation of the Congolese people has been constantly deteriorating.

We have followed with interest the numerous commendable political and diplomatic efforts and initiatives that have been undertaken in recent weeks to save the peace process. The declarations of goodwill must now lead to action on the ground. Today, again, the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement is going through a difficult phase and requires new impetus. The discussion in the Security Council of the next report of the Secretary-General on MONUC will provide us with an opportunity to take stock of the situation, to confirm the commitment of the United Nations and to envisage the decisions to be taken.

Moreover, in the light of the close relationship between the problems shaking the Great Lakes region and the peace process under way, the adoption of a comprehensive approach to address these problems in a regional context is becoming increasingly necessary.

Mr. Ward (Jamaica): My delegation thanks Ms. McAskie for briefing us on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling this humanitarian briefing on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The prevailing political deadlock in the peace process makes it easy to overlook the war's tragic consequences on the population. However, we need to retain our focus on the human dimensions of the conflict, and perhaps this debate will galvanize the warring parties to adopt a constructive attitude towards the resolution of the conflict.

My delegation is deeply concerned by the grave humanitarian situation prevailing in the country. The population affected by the conflict — some 16 million — and the over 2 million internally displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring States exceed the populations of many of the Member States of the United Nations.

We have been told that the magnitude of the crisis and the effect of the conflict on the delivery of aid have resulted in minimal humanitarian assistance being provided to populations in need. Most have to fend for themselves in a country in the grips of war with few or no possibilities for economic activity. This situation has the making of an immense human tragedy.

We are encouraged by the promise of President Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that United Nations observers will be given freedom of movement to oversee the fragile situation. We look forward to the implementation of this promise, and we expect that this same freedom of movement will be guaranteed by other forces involved in the conflict, not just for the observers of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo (MONUC) but also for humanitarian personnel operating in the field.

Tens of thousands of Congolese citizens have sought refuge in neighbouring States. At the same time, over 330,000 refugees have fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The extension of regional conflicts to the soil of the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes the security of these foreign refugees and the 2 million internally displaced persons tenuous. These facts alone support the idea of a conference on the Great Lakes region and a comprehensive approach to the conflicts in the region as a whole.

Within the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself, the systematic targeting of civilian groups by the dozens of ethnic groups, armed rebels and soldiers from up to nine different armies has led to human rights abuses by all sides in this conflict. The cases of extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary arrests, detentions and executions are cause for great concern and must not go unnoticed or unpunished. The culture of impunity must be erased from the face of the earth.

My delegation commends the United Nations humanitarian workers in the field for the tremendous work they have been doing under very trying circumstances. We are pleased to learn of the close and collaborative efforts of the United Nations agencies, the Humanitarian Coordinator and MONUC humanitarian liaison officers and the streamlining of the existing coordination arrangements between the various relief agencies and MONUC. This has already resulted in an improved mechanism for the delivery of aid to those most in need.

My delegation is supportive of any action that would further enhance the efficiency of humanitarian agencies to deliver assistance as well as build confidence in the United Nations agencies and personnel. We note that these objectives could be achieved by enhancing MONUC's air capacity and by making that capacity accessible to all humanitarian agencies in order to reach the most remote parts of the country. Accordingly, we urge the international community to respond to the United Nations consolidated appeal for the year 2000, as well as that for 2001, which is to be announced shortly. It is understood that the 2001 consolidated appeal will have as two of its important components the support of community-based self-recovery initiatives, as well as the promotion of free circulation of persons and goods across the front lines. These are crucial elements for the eventual return to peace, when former enemies will have to resume normal contact with people who were once their mortal enemies.

Despite the successes of the humanitarian programmes, the only way to permanently alleviate the humanitarian situation is to finalize a comprehensive peace agreement. We are disappointed that the Lusaka Agreement has not resulted in overcoming the obstacles to a final peace. We recognize, however, the continued goodwill and commitment on the part of a number of countries in the region to address the situation and advance the peace process. We therefore welcome the news from Maputo that ministers from six Governments and two rebel factions plan to meet on Wednesday to work out details of a revived peace plan to allow United Nations monitors to supervise the ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We trust that the process of peace will prevail. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the other concerned parties must demonstrate a commitment to the peace process.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is yet another stark reminder of the human toll that results from conflict. It reinforces our own views that those who bear primary responsibility for making peace and fail to do so must accept responsibility for the continued suffering of the civilian population under the control of their guns. We have heard every possible reason for the failure of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, and in our view none of these reasons justifies the human suffering described by Ms. McAskie in her statement to the Council today. What is even worse — indeed, reprehensible — are the reports that all parties to the conflict fail to provide secure access to humanitarian aid for those in need in areas under their control. Leaders who perpetuate or ignore wanton human suffering of the kind existing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be judged by the bar of history and hopefully by their fellow countrymen and countrywomen.

Mr. Mohammad Kamal (Malaysia): My delegation joins previous speakers in welcoming Ms. Carolyn McAskie and in thanking her for the comprehensive and lucid briefing on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well the useful document that has been given to us.

We are distressed at the continued precarious security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the potential of that situation to further undermine the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement and Security Council resolution 1291 (2000). The national armies and numerous armed groups that are involved in the war between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi have virtually devastated the country.

The entire socio-economic fabric of the country has been ruined. Infrastructure is non-existent, and areas that used to produce surplus food are no longer producing. Extreme poverty, which existed even prior to the current situation, has now reached catastrophic levels. The economic and political interests of all those present in the sovereign territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have led to the effective partitioning of the country, the exploitation of its wealth and enormous ecological damage.

The saddest part of it all is that the Congolese people are aware of this situation but are helpless to prevent it. The worsening humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly the increased insecurity in war zones, make access to the vulnerable populations very dangerous and difficult for the humanitarian aid workers. My delegation believes that it is critical for the parties to respect their ceasefire agreements and ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian agencies to all areas of the country.

Many areas in the country remain inaccessible to humanitarian personnel due to the prevailing untenable security conditions. All parties to the conflict have an obligation to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and unhindered access to all affected populations.

We have heard in the briefing of Ms. McAskie just now that there are about 2 million internally displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, many of whom are languishing without any assistance. The vast majority of these internally displaced persons are from the occupied territories in the eastern part of the country, principally as a result of clashes between Rwandan and Ugandan troops in Kisangani, the intensified hostilities in the Kivus and the current fighting in the northern Equateur province. The increasing number of Congolese refugees has serious ramifications, not only for the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also for the neighbouring countries, with some 300,000 people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo now refugees in the Republic of the Congo, Zambia, the Central African Republic and Tanzania, as stated by Ms. McAskie just now.

My delegation is cognizant of the difficulties and complexities that must be overcome in order to achieve durable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nevertheless, no matter how complex and difficult it might appear to find solutions, the suffering of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo compels us to make our best efforts to put an end to their misery. We agree that it is vital to create the conditions for lasting peace based on the full implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The elements of such a peace must necessarily include the questions of security of the borders of the States concerned, their sovereignty and territorial integrity and their full use of their natural resources. In this regard, we support the call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and reaffirm support for the unity, stability, independence and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the same time, the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo must take place in accordance with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and as called for in resolution 1304 (2000). It is indeed regrettable that the parties continue to ignore the pronouncements of the Security Council and the international community.

It is for this reason that Malaysia believes that the timely deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is essential to the resolution of the conflict. Having listened carefully to the views of our colleagues here today, particularly those from the African continent, the Council should accelerate its deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and implement faithfully and speedily resolution 1291 (2000). This is crucial in the current circumstances and will be a critical test of the Council's political will and determination. We believe that we must go forward from here, determined to make a difference in promoting peace and security for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, we wish to pay tribute to and encourage the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and the non-governmental humanitarian organizations involved in caring for and facilitating the repatriation of refugees to continue their noble work despite the difficulties encountered.

Mr. Kassé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I join other speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on having convened this public information meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in thanking Ms. McAskie, through you, for her most edifying briefing.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country of continental scope. Its stability has repercussions for that of the entire African continent and directly affects that of its nine neighbouring countries. The re-establishment of regional peace and stability will require the restoration of respect for the fundamental principles clearly reaffirmed by the signatories to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, chief among which is that of the unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the inviolability of its borders. At the same time, the neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also have the right to live in security within defined borders, free from destabilizing activities launched from Congolese territory.

The other factor essential to the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is national reconciliation. A third, additional factor for stability is the humanitarian situation, because, as members are aware, humanitarian crises often give rise to conflicts, but just as invariably conflicts give rise to humanitarian crises.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has just painted a picture of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That picture could just as easily depict the human rights situation, as the statistics, refugees and displaced persons attest. The poverty, destitution, disease and famine rampant in the Democratic Republic of the Congo constitute in and of themselves violations of human rights.

This situation is a source of deep concern to my delegation, for the heavy price being paid by civilians in this conflict is unacceptable. It is equally intolerable that the intense fighting is hindering the access of humanitarian agencies to many regions, particularly the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, depriving vulnerable populations of the precious assistance they so sorely need.

It has been stressed innumerable times by the Council that humanitarian problems must receive direct attention, not only during the negotiation of peace agreements, but also from peacekeeping operations. This would indeed guarantee the prior planning required by the humanitarian elements of peacekeeping operations and allow the immediate mobilization of necessary resources. Moreover, the success of a peace agreement often depends, at least in part, on humanitarian intervention, particularly that which enables the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons, assistance to demobilized combatants, the restoration of sources of income for war-affected persons and help for ex-combatants in finding new means of subsistence. My delegation reminds the signatories to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement that this instrument has numerous provisions for the simultaneous protection of civilians and their human rights, as well as for the delivery of humanitarian assistance via humanitarian corridors and the establishment of conditions conducive to providing emergency assistance to displaced persons, refugees and others.

Furthermore, similar provisions are to be found in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. All the Council's resolutions must be accorded the same degree of importance and must therefore be implemented without discrimination or procrastination. In this respect, all the signatories and the international community, collectively or individually, must assume their responsibilities, for, more than ever before, the gravity of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its disastrous humanitarian consequences require every effort to be made to relaunch the peace process.

Today's meeting affords my delegation the opportunity to pay tribute to and thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, all the humanitarian agencies and the many non-governmental organizations that are actively seeking to address the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We

also thank the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) for its very positive role in supporting and assisting humanitarian operations. This humanitarian dimension of MONUC should be encouraged and developed.

In conclusion, Mali remains convinced that United Nations coordination, backed by a fully deployed MONUC — and I stress "fully deployed" — will allow us to improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian assistance that the Democratic Republic of the Congo so sorely needs today.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

The Netherlands, too, would like to thank Ms. McAskie for her straightforward briefing, depressing as it was. Apart from the misery heaped upon the Congolese people themselves, reference was made around this table today to the appalling circumstances in which humanitarian workers have to do their work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the very acute dangers they face in this context. As recently as two weeks ago, we heard the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees make the case for improving the safety and security of United Nations personnel, especially in situations of conflict, in the face of the increasing risks they encounter in the field.

Of course, the Council addressed this issue as early as February this year and, on that occasion, issued a presidential statement. Given the present situation of an apparent deterioration in the security conditions of United Nations personnel, however, I intend to circulate, as a Security Council document, the petition that I received from the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System and the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, which appeal to the Security Council to look into this issue further.

Switching to another subject, it is difficult to respond to a humanitarian briefing without talking politics. Some of the statements we have heard in this meeting bear this out. My delegation would like to make just one observation of a political nature.

Ever since the Security Council was invited to endorse the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, some delegations on this Council have tried to give our involvement a slightly different slant by, on the one hand, introducing the distinction between invited and uninvited troops — also characterized as "allies" and "aggressors" — and, on the other, glossing over President Kabila's reluctance to implement the national dialogue.

It goes without saying that every delegation is perfectly entitled to try and effect that adjustment, but we would like to point out that if the distinction between invited and uninvited troops had been made in Lusaka, and if the national dialogue had been deleted from the draft text, the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement would simply not have been concluded. Delegations that insist on these adjustments must therefore know what they are doing. It may be true that Lusaka requires an update. There seems to have been a consensus from the outset that the task Lusaka allotted to the United Nations by way of tracking down members of the former Rwandan armed forces and Interahamwe was hardly realistic. But an update of Lusaka is, of course, conceivable only if it is acceptable to at least all the signatory States.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call on Ms. McAskie to respond to comments and questions from members of the Council.

Ms. McAskie: First of all, I wish, through you, Mr. President, to thank the members of the Council for their very sincere expressions of concern and support for the humanitarian effort, in terms of support for the victims, support for the humanitarian agencies working on the ground, and support for the coordinating role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. I find particularly gratifying the growing synergy between humanitarian and political discussions which has increasingly characterized the work of the Security Council.

Let me touch first on some points raised by the representative of the United Kingdom, who made some comments about the coordinated aid strategy. We were very gratified by greater donor interest at a meeting held in October in Geneva, where a number of donors urged us to mount a much more aggressive humanitarian programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That is one of the reasons why the consolidated appeal being distributed now is considerably larger than that for 2000. There is definitely interest in a broader strategic approach. What

one needs to understand is that the evolution of the consolidated appeal process means that that process now in fact represents a common humanitarian action plan, which is outlined in the document and which has in itself become a tool for a much more coordinated approach.

We see much closer cooperation between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and I see — not just in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also in other crises — a breakdown of the "them and us" mentality that has characterized relations between the NGO and the United Nations communities in the past. We recognize that some NGOs have very specific niches and that they should be respected; provided that we respect each other's roles, we find that it is getting easier and easier to work very positively within the framework of an overall common objective.

In terms of relations between the United Nations and the local authorities — the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — and in terms of United Nations relations with parties to the conflict and of what obstacles are seen in those relations, perhaps I could just refer again to the issue of access. We find that access has been constrained, sometimes hampered, but sometimes also assisted. There is good and bad in every situation. Certainly, the Minister of the Interior of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has helped overcome certain bureaucratic constraints. But at the same time, I recall the comment I made in my opening remarks about one notable instance of being unable to get access to an estimated 300,000 displaced persons in Equateur: that was because of delays in issuing travel permits — not that I would ever consider that that was deliberate. But it was an unfortunate byproduct of the very complicated and difficult situation on the ground. In terms of our working with rebel groups, it is true that they welcome humanitarian assistance. But no rebel movement is able to guarantee security for us.

What is interesting about the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is that in many parts of the upcountry areas it is not that the roads are deteriorating; it is that there are virtually no roads. As the representative of the United States mentioned, a lot of the traffic is by river. And a lot of the river traffic right now is dominated by military movements and rebel movements. What that means is that the humanitarians are denied access to the only form of transport in and out of some areas. What we would be looking for is guarantees of river access. But we would also want to be in a position to negotiate humanitarian access across the lines of conflict.

With respect to other constraints to the humanitarian effort, I mentioned the issue of child-combatant recruitment. I mentioned the exchange rate, and I could repeat that: the exchange rate issue is one that we would hope will be solved.

On the better side, as I said, in some areas our relationships with the authorities are very good. In fact, with the support of authorities at all levels, the United Nations is currently organizing a workshop on health and education issues in rebel-held Kisangani with the participation of specialists from all over the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In other areas, the Government is helping us with access to schools and to clinics. So it is a bit of this and a bit of that; there is no one specific answer.

In answer to a more specific question raised by the United Kingdom about where the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) could assist, the obvious area, of course, will be security for access. That goes without saying, and I think it is something we have consistently hoped for should MONUC be able to fully deploy.

But there is one specific area in which the Council might wish to consider taking action. At the moment, the funds voted for peacekeeping operations are very specific in the sense of being limited to activities undertaken by peacekeepers in the performance of their peacekeeping duties. There have been a number of instances where the humanitarian community has sought the help of a peacekeeping operation for transport, for example, because it is much more secure. Now, in the case of MONUC, in Kisangani for example, we had a recent instance of MONUC providing transport to the humanitarians. Because that is not budgeted in the peacekeeping effort, they have to charge us at cost, and their cost is twice as much as it would cost us to hire commercial transport on the local market. We have the choice of going for the cheaper one or going for the safer one. That will also be an issue in the request which Mrs. Ogata has made to MONUC — a request to which the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has gladly acceded — for assistance with MONUC transport in the assistance to refugees in the Central African

Republic and in the Republic of the Congo. Again, the issue of cost will come in. And this money is coming out of donor contributions to the humanitarian effort. One way or another, we pay; the question is do we pay through the assessed peacekeeping budget or do we pay through the voluntary humanitarian budgets. I leave that particular conundrum to the Council to consider.

In terms of the greatest security threats, these vary with the changing military situation. Currently, the greatest difficulties we have been facing have been in South Kivu, and also in Katanga. As I mentioned, we hope that further deployment of MONUC will expand the security envelope, which will promote the ability of humanitarian organizations to gain access to the populations.

In response to the question of my Canadian colleague, we do in fact believe that the presence of MONUC, with the additional security that it would provide, will facilitate humanitarian assistance. It is true that the presence of the United Nations is seen as controversial and that questions have been raised as to whether or not the humanitarian workers should go it alone. I think that, given the situation prevailing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we would welcome the security MONUC that would provide in terms of potential access and escorts and with regard to the issue of international witnesses.

With regard to the related question of civilian observers, which was raised by our French colleague, it is true that the deployment of civilian observers would increase MONUC's potential to see and report on human rights violations. Obviously, it should be noted that there are already 11 humanitarian affairs officers and child protection officers within MONUC who are working very closely with the humanitarian community. In fact, a multi-agency visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo that took place just last week has recommended better organization of the coordination arrangements and even closer cooperation between the civilian aspects of MONUC and the humanitarian community.

Let me just add one point with regard to security. There are reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the security of United Nations and other humanitarian staff, and we know, of course, that the potential for raising budgetary funds for this is constrained by the fact that we will have to wait until the next biennium, as that is the budget cycle. In the interim, we have made a much greater concerted effort this year — with the full encouragement of donors — to include in the consolidated appeals a particular appeal for paying the cost of the security elements of each mission. Out of the total amounts being requested, we are requesting between $13 and $14 million across the board, not just for the Congo, for the cost of security.

I mention now, because this applies particularly to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, that we would encourage donors planning to contribute to humanitarian projects to also ensure that they fund this vital security line. Without a proper security regime in place for the humanitarian workers in the Congo, there is a very real danger that the projects themselves that we wish to support will not be able to go ahead.

I thank you very much, Mr. President. I hope that I have commented on all the points that were raised as questions. Once again, let me thank the members of the Council very much for their very strong words of support for the humanitarian community in their interventions this afternoon.

The President: I thank Ms. McAskie for her comments.

I shall now call on Ambassador Andjaba, but I know that Ms. McAskie has to leave at 5.15 p.m., and she should feel free to go if she wants to catch her plane.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): I will be very brief in order not to delay the departure of Ms. McAskie.

I thought this afternoon's discussion and briefing were very useful. I wish once again to thank Ms. McAskie for that, and for providing additional information in response to the questions and comments of members of the Council.

But, Mr. President, the usefulness of this meeting has been disturbed, to say the least, by what you said in your national capacity. I believe that you can distort whatever you want to distort, but the reality on the ground remains as it is. There is aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That is a fact; you cannot change it. There are invited forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and there are forces there that were not invited. That is a fact, and you cannot change it, even if you want to. Security Council resolutions are very clear on this matter. They make a clear distinction between invited and uninvited

forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is therefore incomprehensible to hear you time and again trying to defend the aggressors instead of defending the victim. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a victim of aggression. That is clear.

My delegation is flabbergasted by the way in which your delegation and you personally, Mr. President, have been approaching this issue. I did not intend to say this, but I have the right to respond to what you said in your national capacity. Again, that there are invited and uninvited forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a fact that you may wish to distort, but your distortion will not change the reality.

I promised to be brief, and I have been brief. I reserve the right to come back again if you so wish, Mr. President. I am ready to spend more time in this meeting if you wish.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.